

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

**This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:**

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1. (currently amended): ~~A composition comprising, as an essential component thereof, a biologically pure culture of a~~An isolated lactic acid bacterial strain belonging to the genus *Lactococcus* ~~and,~~ wherein the bacterial strain is *Lactococcus garvieae* ~~and~~ the bacterial strain has an ability to utilize at least one daidzein compound selected from the group consisting of daidzein glycosides, daidzein, and dihydrodaidzein to produce equol.

2. (canceled).

3. (currently amended): The isolated lactic acid bacterial strain belonging to the genus *Lactococcus* ~~composition according to Claim 2~~Claim 1, wherein said lactic acid bacterial strain belonging to *Laetococcus* which is *Lactococcus garvieae* 20-92 deposited under FERM BP-10036.

4. (currently amended): ~~A~~The composition comprising the isolated lactic acid bacterial strain belonging to the genus *Lactococcus* according to Claim 1 ~~further comprising and~~ at least one member selected from the group consisting of daidzein compounds and daidzein compound-containing ingredients.

5. **(original):** The composition according to Claim 4, wherein the daidzein compound-containing ingredient is soybean flour or soy milk.
6. **(original):** The composition according to Claim 4 which is in the form of a beverage or a milk product.
7. **(original):** The composition according to Claim 4 further comprising equol.
8. **(original):** The composition according to Claim 7 which is in the form of a fermentation product of soy milk.
9. **(withdrawn-currently amended):** A method of producing equol comprising the step of letting ~~a biologically pure culture of an isolated~~ lactic acid bacterial strain belonging to the genus *Lactococcus*, wherein the bacterial strain is *Lactococcus garvieae* and the bacterial strain has an ability to utilize a daidzein compound to produce equol, act on at least one member selected from the group consisting of daidzein compounds and daidzein compound-containing ingredients.
10. **(canceled).**

**11. (withdrawn-currently amended):** The method according to Claim 9~~10~~ wherein said isolated lactic acid bacterial strain belonging to the genus *Lactococcus* is *Lactococcus garvieae* 20-92 deposited under FERM BP-10036.

**12. (withdrawn):** The method according to Claim 9, wherein the daidzein compound-containing ingredient is soybean flour or soy milk.

**13. (currently amended):** ~~A~~An isolated lactic acid bacterial strain belonging to the genus *Lactococcus* as deposited under FERM BP-10036.

**14. (new):** A composition comprising an isolated lactic acid bacterial strain belonging to *Lactococcus garvieae* and an edible or pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.